EXPANSION OF

PLAY AND PLAYFULNESS

Children experience open and flexible environments where playful exploration, problem solving and creativity are encouraged and purposefully planned.
Inclusiveness and Equity
Compassion and Caring
Living Democratically
Individuality and Independence
Social Responsibility
Communication
Imagination, Creativity & Play
Spirituality
Zest for Living and Learning
Aesthetics
Play and Playfulness
Expansion of Play and Playfulness

Children experience open and flexible environments where playful exploration, problem solving and creativity are encouraged and purposefully planned.

Imagination and Creativity

Children develop dispositions for flexible and fluid thinking.
Children invent symbols and develop systems of representation.
Children create imaginary scenarios in which they explore new possibilities and take possession of their worlds.

Playful Exploration and Problem Solving

Children learn about the properties of objects.
Children test their limits.
Children learn to negotiate the complexities of joint undertakings.
Children learn to employ creative approaches to identifying and working out practical problems.

Dizzy Play

Children take pleasure in being on the edge.
Children take pleasure in sharing the joy of laughter.
**Imagination and Creativity**

**Children develop dispositions for flexible and fluid thinking.**
*Educators encourage children to find different ways of doing things and honour unique and novel responses.*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>What’s involved in learning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seeing people, places, and things in new ways</td>
<td>After hearing the story about Santa bringing a puppy for Christmas, two boys (4 years) re-enact the plot using the mailbox from the dramatic play area as a chimney. <em>Passamaquaddy Children’s Centre Inc.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing unique and imaginative ideas</td>
<td>Brendan (4 years) says, “I’m painting the sky green... the frogs are going to invade.” The educator supports Brendan’s ideas in responding: “I think green is a good colour for a froggy invasion.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Encourage multiple solutions, explanations, and strategies; acknowledge each child’s contributions. Ask questions like “What do you think?” and, “Is there another way to do that?”

Honour and applaud children’s imaginative ideas and productions.

Provide materials, time, and an accepting atmosphere for children to create.

Listen respectfully, model openness to new ideas, and encourage children to consider alternative ways of thinking.

**For Reflection**

Do you take time to play with open-ended materials as a way of exploring your own creativity? Think about how the children may view and represent their world.

Think about cultural notions of play. What do you consider play? What do families in your centre think about play? How do children view play?
# Imagination and Creativity

**Children invent symbols and develop systems of representation.** 
*Educators encourage children as they represent their experiences in their own way.*

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<td>Making up their own words, marks, and movements</td>
<td>Kathleen (4 years) is getting ready for a special visitor. She cuts out small rectangle shapes and writes various marks and lines on them, then uses stickers to fasten the “name tags” to everyone’s shirt. <em>Kings County Kids Daycare Centre</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiating the meaning of symbols with others</td>
<td>Lana (3 years) draws three circles in the dirt outside. She then says to the group around her, “This is a stop light, when I point here you have to stop cause it is red. This is green, and this is yellow. Green means you can go and yellow is the same as red, you stop.” <em>Kings County Kids Daycare Centre</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking up and reshaping cultural experiences</td>
<td>Late in the spring, several four-year-olds gather bags and “pack a lunch” as they set out “fiddleheading” on the playground.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing awareness of the imagined and ordinary worlds they move between as they play</td>
<td>Jadon (4 years) is playing with the train set. He places a barrier on the tracks but another child drives a train through the barrier. “You can’t do that!” says Jadon. “You can’t do that on the real train tracks. That might cause an accident.” He replaces the barrier. <em>Kings County Kids Daycare Centre</em></td>
</tr>
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</table>
Provide rich and open-ended materials for children to define in their own ways.

Model flexible and playful use of language, materials, and props.

Recognize and respond to children’s symbol-making.

Accept and make use of children’s invented symbols to extend their thinking, both within the play scenario and beyond.

Be aware of the culture, customs, and rituals of the community; provide props specific to those customs and rituals.

Develop your own techniques for talking with children; encourage them to think about extending and elaborating their play.

**For Reflection**

When children share their symbol-making systems (mark making/storytelling/symbolic representation) how do you honour their systems? How would you encourage children to share their systems with other children and families? How do you document their process?

Are materials and props in your room easily accessible to children? Do children select their own materials. Think about the variety/range of materials available. Can children transport materials from one area to another? Consider how often you change and rotate materials throughout your room.
**Imagination and Creativity**

*Children create imaginary scenarios in which to explore new possibilities and take possession of their worlds.*

*Educators play along, and provide ideas, materials and information for children to enrich their imaginary play.*

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<td>Creating social spaces and shared narratives</td>
<td>Sherry, Ron, and Jose (4 years) pretend part of the block corner is a rocket ship. Sherry says, “We’re going to the moon. Right? Put the food there, Ron,” and starts the countdown, “10, 9, 8 …”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creating alternative systems of power</td>
<td>Spencer (3 years) begins to imitate the educator’s role at circle time. He picks up two blocks and taps them together. “Sit down with me, come here,” he says to his friend and passes him two sticks. He then sings ABC’s using the sticks as rhythm sticks. “Okay, now you pick one,” he says. His friend says, “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.” Spencer gathers up the rhythm sticks and says, “Don’t need them for that one,” and does the actions with the song. <em>Kings County Kids Daycare Centre</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Coping with emotional pressure</td>
<td>Preparations for a new baby in David’s family involved talk about David’s role as the “big brother.” Not long after the baby is home from the hospital, David (3 years) takes on the role of baby in the dramatic play area, babbling, crying, and demanding attention.</td>
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</table>
Provide spaces for children to spend time together, meet each other on their own terms, form social groups, and define roles.

Give children opportunities to explore relations of power, to feel a sense of control, and to work out fears, hopes and dreams related to central ideas of good and evil.

Understand that children are working through complex life situations when they play; support the development that takes place as they do so.

Observe and document these play scenarios to inform planning and assessment, and help to facilitate conversations with families.

**For Reflection**

How do you inspire children and enhance their imaginative potential? Think about materials that inspire. What experiences and role models have been sources of inspiration recently for the children’s play and art work in your centre?

How do you intervene when fantasy play (e.g. superhero play) is disruptive? For example — do you enter as a character? Do you change the tone of play by dropping your voice to a whisper as you enter the play? Do you redirect or refocus the play by inviting children to draw, paint, or scribe superhero stories?

How do you create spaces and time to connect with families? How do the lives of families enter imaginary play? As the educator, how do you share play scenarios with families to gain insight into children working through complex life situations?
**Playful Exploration and Problem Solving**

Children learn about the properties of objects.

Educators provide a wide variety of materials and help children with the language to theorize, describe and articulate their actions on objects.

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<td>Playfully exploring and investigating the properties of objects</td>
<td>Anil (18 months) takes everything out of his treasure basket and begins to shake, bang, bite, and roll the various items. <em>Passamaquoddy Children’s Centre Inc.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimenting with action and reaction, cause and effect</td>
<td>Catherine (2 years) is pushing a toy truck across the room. It bumps into a balloon. She watches the impact of the truck on the balloon and tries different speeds to see what the impact will be. <em>Just Kids Daycare Centre Inc.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating patterns and relationships — sorting and matching, sizing and ordering, sequencing and grouping</td>
<td>Rachel (2 years) is playing with the elephant toys. She lines them all up smallest to biggest, then knocks them over and says, “Ooohhh.” She then stands them up again from smallest to biggest. <em>Kings County Kids Daycare Centre</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing a vocabulary to describe similarities and differences, patterns and relationships</td>
<td>Olivia (4 years) is painting at the easel. She turns to Katie (the educator) and says, “Look! Look, look, look! I made peach... like inside a peach.” Katie asks her how she made that colour. “Well you see, it’s just white and orange.” Katie then asks her if she can make any other colours. “Yes, I can make green, purple and brown.... Cool!” <em>Kings County Kids Daycare Centre</em></td>
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</table>
Provide a wide variety of natural and manufactured materials that children can safely explore and manipulate on their own terms.

Organize materials so that they are accessible to children.

Quietly stand by ready to help children and respond to their initiations.

Provide materials that children can manipulate in a variety of ways; encourage them to find out “what will happen if...”

Help children find ways of recording cause and effect; encourage them to theorize about how things work and experiment to test out their theories.

Provide construction, art materials and board games that prompt children to group and regroup.

Respond when children notice similarities and differences.

Provide containers for sorting and organizing materials.

Involve children in labelling shelves and containers with pictures and print so they can sort and match as they put things away.

Use teachable moments to provide specific language in the context of children’s activities: language of similarity and difference, spatial and temporal relations, number, texture, tone, and volume.
**Playful Exploration and Problem Solving**

**Children learn about the properties of objects.**

*Educators provide a wide variety of materials and help children with the language to theorize, describe and articulate their actions on objects.*

*For Reflection*

How do you support children in language development through their play? Think about restating and extending children’s responses using precise language to name things; consciously expand children’s vocabularies.

Walk about your room with children’s eye level in mind. How do you support children’s access to spaces, objects, and materials? What is available to children to manipulate and investigate?

Children learn about the properties of objects. Educators provide a wide variety of materials and help children with the language to theorize, describe and articulate their actions on objects.

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Inclusiveness and Equity
Compassion and Caring

• Living Democratically
• Individuality
• Social Responsibility

• Communication
• Imagination, Creativity & Play
• Spirituality
• Zest for Living and Learning
**Playful Exploration and Problem Solving**

**Children test their limits.**
*Educators provide safe spaces for children to test and contest their growing capacities.*

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<td>Testing their powers of observation and sensory discrimination</td>
<td>As Zack and June (4 years) play <em>Concentration</em> they become increasingly adept at remembering where their opponent has placed a matching card.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing strength, speed, agility and control over movement</td>
<td>While sitting on a spinning toy, Maddison (3 years) has trouble getting it going. She lies on her belly and tries to push with her hands but the mat is too slippery. “I need sticky stuff,” she says and gets a piece of fruit that has Velcro on it. She lies down again and uses the Velcro to grip the mat, spinning herself faster and faster. <em>Kings County Kids Daycare Centre</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUGGESTED PROVISIONS AND PRACTICES

Provide variety in sights, sounds, tastes, textures, and smells.

Encourage children to look, listen, smell, touch, and taste, and to make comparisons using all their senses.

Provide toys, equipment, and spaces that safely challenge the physical capacities of children; provide encouragement and applaud their efforts; participate with them.

For Reflection

How does your environment encourage healthy risk taking? Where do children run, climb, and jump? Think about the distinction between challenging and hazardous environments.

In what ways do children challenge each other to test their limits? How do children support each other through these challenges? During this process, consider your role and your influence in balancing safety with courage. Help children to make decisions about participation.

Hammerhead by Sam
Children learn to negotiate the complexities of joint undertakings. Educators provide materials, observe and revisit experiences to discuss what works and what does not.

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<td>Negotiating rules of time, space, and roles</td>
<td>Jan (3 years) and Louise (3 years) are playing house. They both want to be mommy. Jan says, “We’ll both be the mommy,” and then, “We’ll have two mommies.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making collective plans and decisions about the directions of their play</td>
<td>A group of children decide to drain a big puddle in their outdoor play area. James (4 years) says, “We can dig rivers.” Ron (4 years) and Ye (4 years) respond with “Yeah!” and take up their shovels.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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| Developing a sense of fair play | When Alyssa (4 years) arrives one morning she is visibly sad to see her mom leave. She goes over to the playdough table but one of the children says, “This is full — see four friends!” Vanessa (3 years) speaks up, “She can be with me and have some of my room.” She gives some playdough to Alyssa as she moves over to make room. *Kings County Kids Daycare Centre*  
During the hello song, Ryan (18 months) points to everyone and says their names to make sure that they each get a verse sung about them. *Passamaquoddy Children’s Centre Inc.* |
Recognize that through play children learn the language of negotiation and the function of rules.

Listen and intervene only if children clearly need new strategies or emotional support.

Help children revisit their play experiences.

Respect children’s right to shape their own agendas; appreciate that their plans may be vague and are often in the process of being refined or revised.

Help children articulate their intentions and strategies — verbally, or with pictures, print, gestures, or other forms of symbolic representation.

Encourage children to notice what others are doing and how they may be feeling.

Provide time for children to act independently of adult guidance, yet help them carry through with rules for fair play if needed.

**For Reflection**

Examine your own beliefs about competition and cooperation. Where do these fit in the play environment? Consider cultural notions underlying these concepts.

Consider your interactions with children who are negotiating conflict during play. How do body language, facial expressions, and physical responses help children? How do you encourage them to reflect on their behaviour? How do you model rules of fair play to solve their problems?
**Playful Exploration and Problem Solving**

**Children learn to employ creative approaches to identifying and working out practical problems.**

*Educators step back to allow time for children to work things out, providing materials and perspectives when necessary.*

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<td>Developing sustained, shared thinking</td>
<td>Several four-years-olds work together to build “the tallest building ever” from straws and connectors. As Leigh, the educator approaches, she wonders out loud how they could make it as tall as she is. <em>UNB Children’s Centre</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raising questions and making hypotheses about how and why things happen</td>
<td>Jason (4 years) is making sand castles with his educator, Joanne. When his castle does not stay together he questions, “Why didn’t mine work?” “Let’s do it again,” he suggests. He watches as Joanne puts the sand in the pail, then says, “You pushed yours down.” He packs his down and tries the castle again. “I did it, I needed to push it down.” <em>Kings County Kids Daycare Centre</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choosing from a range of materials, tools, and languages to investigate, experiment, and make their thinking visible</td>
<td>Blaine (4 years) says, “Let’s make a crane train.” Angela, his educator, asks, “How could we do that and what would we need?” “I will show you,” he says and goes to the easel. He proceeds to paint a detailed picture of a crane train before telling Angela all about it. Together they decide to collect materials to build their very own crane train. <em>Kings County Kids Daycare</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating imagined worlds in which they can explore possibilities and test alternative solutions</td>
<td>Jesse (4 years) and Amy (4 years) build a dinosaur den for themselves after being excluded by the boys. In their den, play is much quieter and involves mommy dinosaurs taking care of their children.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUGGESTED PROVISIONS AND PRACTICES

Interject new ideas and document learning so that children can revisit and reflect on their thinking.

Use picture books, videos, and field trips to connect children’s ideas and narratives to those of others.

Encourage children to devise their own ways of using materials and to find the answers to their questions through their own actions.

Make a range of materials readily available and allow children to choose what they think will work best.

Encourage children to reproduce their ideas through more than one medium.

Listen to children’s ideas and suggest possibilities for alternative solutions.

Include open-ended materials that lend themselves to symbolizing any number of different things.
Playful Exploration and Problem Solving

Children learn to employ creative approaches to identifying and working out practical problems. Educators step back to allow time for children to work things out, providing materials and perspectives when necessary.

For Reflection

How do you help children to seek multiple solutions to the problems they encounter? Think about how questions and why questions that promote children’s theory building in order to extend and deepen their understanding.

How do you promote and extend children’s thinking at play? Think about how to follow their lead, ground your language in what they are doing/saying, and provide materials, books, and experiences that enable them to extend their thinking and play.

How does your centre provide for constructive play activities? Think about blocks, for both in and out of doors, and other building materials such as wood and nails, cardboard boxes and glue.

A poodle going on the swing by Amy
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• Individuality                     And Independence

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• Communication

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• Spirituality

• Zest for Living and Learning
# Dizzy Play

**Children take pleasure in being on the edge.**
*Educators recognize, value, and provide safe spaces for dizzy play.*

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<td><strong>Engaging in rough and tumble play</strong></td>
<td>Anne (4 years) and Billy (3 years) wrestle together on the floor, laughing and panting with exertion. Billy shouts “Ding!” and the wrestlers return to their corners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experiencing exhilarating physical release</strong></td>
<td>Liam (3 years) begins spinning round and round. Soon several other children are doing the same thing. As they become too dizzy to stand up, they fall one by one. When their worlds stop turning they get to their feet and start spinning all over again. <em>Chatham Daycare Centre Inc.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Playing at games of disrupting and restoring order</strong></td>
<td>Maya (4 years) and Teddy (4 years) are playing in the block corner where they build a wall with blocks. As soon as it is completed they run their toy cars into it and together say, “Bang!” They then rebuild and crash, rebuild and crash, whooping each time the blocks come tumbling down.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUGGESTED PROVISIONS AND PRACTICES

Recognize that rough and tumble play differs from fighting because there is no intent to harm.

Look for facial expressions and unclenched fists as signs for distinguishing rough and tumble play from aggressive play.

Ensure access to soft surfaces.

Recognize that energy bursts, such as spinning, rolling, running, and shouting, are part of the healthy development of children and also an expression of their zest for living.

Ensure opportunities, both indoors and out, for children to move freely and safely.

Recognize that noisy and chaotic play differs from aggressive acts such as knocking down another child’s structure without their consent.

Observe interactions between players, looking for implied “rules” and listening for language of negotiation to help identify the activity as a game.

Determine when the play is getting out of control and help children restore order and calm themselves.

For Reflection

How do you value and respond to rowdy, physical dizzy play? What is your comfort level and how does this affect allowances you make for children? Are there differing beliefs about this kind of play in your centre? Have you, or adults you know, played in these ways with children? Think about chasing, tossing, singing nonsense songs.

Have the educators at your center discussed dizzy play? What do you value about dizzy play? Are some spaces, equipment, and materials more appropriate than others for dizzy play? Consider families’ perspectives of dizzy play and how this connects with the centre’s practices.

Suggested Provisions and Practices
DIZZY PLAY

Children take pleasure in sharing the joy of laughter.
Educators laugh with the children and participate in the spontaneity of dizzy play.

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<td>Making nonsense</td>
<td>Shawnda and her four-year-olds are singing the greeting song. As the children respond, some say their names in funny voices and others use made-up names like Spaghetti, Pickles, and Meatballs. Shawnda joins in with the fun and laughter. Unicorn Children’s Centre Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clowning and physical humour</td>
<td>Lane (2 years) wants to wash the bus. He asks Tammy, the educator, “Wash bus?” Tammy says, “Go ahead. What else would you like to wash?” Lane takes the face cloth and says, “Hair” as he puts the face cloth on his head. “Silly Lane, is your hair dirty?” asks Tammy. “NO WAY!” says Lane. Chatham Day Care Centre Inc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pogo dreaming by Myah
SUGGESTED PROVISIONS AND PRACTICES

Recognize that fun is found in the disorder children impose on the language; although these episodes may be trying, they are usually short lived, as children are likely to restore the order that they have disrupted.

Understand that children often learn about social conventions through the process of deliberately misrepresenting/ misunderstanding them as a way to elicit laughter from others.

Recognize that children may cover up their mistakes by repeating them in exaggerated form.

For Reflection

How do you use nonsense language in books, songs, and poems to evoke laughter? Do children chime in, learn the rhythms of the language, and add spontaneous words and laughter? Does the nonsense language continue during play and create more moments for laughter?

Laughing with, rather than laughing at, others is an important concept for children to learn. How do you encourage laughing together in your centre?
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Me and my friends by Natalie